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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: LAGOS BUILDS FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION

REF: 08 LAGOS 270

¶1. (U) Summary: Officials of the Lagos State Ministry of Transport and related agencies, met June 29-July 3, with U.S. Department of Transportation's Rita Daguillard and National Transit Institute Director Paul Larousse, to outline the state's efforts at creating an integrated transportation system and the challenges facing it. They highlighted several skills gaps, including transport planning, traffic, railway and marine engineering, and transportation modelling, and they noted the lack of integration between urban and transportation planning, weak institutional structures and an unregulated public transportation network as their chief constraints. In spite of these gaps and constraints, the conscious effort to solve Lagos's perennial traffic problem is appreciated by many Lagosians who spend long hours commuting daily. End Summary.

Ministry of Transport: Formulating Transport Policy

¶2. (U) Lagos State Commissioner for Transport, Bamidele Badejo said his ministry's focus since 2007 has been providing affordable public transport service through public-private partnerships (PPP). The Ministry of Transport (MOT) specifically created a unit to formulate policies and coordinate the State's PPP transport initiatives. In a June 29 presentation to Rita Daguillard, Director of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Research Management and Paul Larousse, Director of the National Transit Institute, MOT Permanent Secretary, Oluseyi Coker said the ministry's policies are aimed at eliminating chaos on Lagos roads. He said several specialized units - autonomous and semiautonomous - have been created to institutionalize proper transportation management including the Lagos Area Metropolitan Transport Authority (LAMATA), Motor Vehicle Administration Agency (MVAA), Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA), Lagos State Waterways Authority (LASWA) and Lagos State Drivers' Institute (LDRI).

¶3. (U) Coker outlined the ministry's activities over the past one year despite a 50 percent cut in its capital budget from naira 6 billion (\$40.5 million) in 2008. Top of the list was the introduction of high capacity buses on Lagos' new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, modern taxi cabs, ferries, and water taxis. He also highlighted the full automation of the motor vehicle and drivers' registration as key achievements. Preliminary work on introduction

of light rail transport has also begun, he said.

LAMATA: Identifies Major Transportation Skills Gap

14. (U) June 30, Dayo Mobereola, CEO of LAMATA identified the major skills gaps in Lagos's transportation system including transportation planning, traffic engineering, railway engineering, marine engineering, transit modelling, public transport operations (bus, railway and ferry), and transport regulation. He noted that years of neglect had ensured that past transport professionals did not pass on their knowledge to new generations, a trend Lagos Governor Babatunde Fashola (Action Congress-AC) plans to reverse through LAMATA and the establishment of a School of Transport at the Lagos State University, fashioned after the US National Transit Institute. Mobereola lamented that at inception, LAMATA had to contend with poor traffic management, lack of integration between urban and transport planning, poor road capacity, weak institutional structures and an unregulated public transport network. The agency has since done significant repairs on roads and related infrastructure, improved economic efficiency with the enforcement of transport regulations and lower transport costs via the BRT.

LASWA: Managing Lagos Waterways

15. (U) The Lagos State Waterways Authority (LASWA), inaugurated in 2008, now manages the Lagos waterways. July 2, Babajide Cole, CEO of LASWA told the DOT visitors his agency's mandate is to promote, develop, and regulate the operation of vessels and various marine crafts within the Lagos waters, and collect tolls, fees and levies

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for the use of the waterways and water transport infrastructure by licensed operators and concessionaires. LASWA is the first sub-national waterways agency in Nigeria. It has dredged the waterways, built jetties and licensed two private operators; Metro Ferry and CityLink Marine, to establish full scale water transportation systems in Lagos, he said.

16. (U) Both companies now run ferry services to and from several locations including Ikorodu, on the Lagos mainland and Badore, Marina, Osborne and Falomo on the island. Metro ferry, which has eight vessels with maximum capacity for 42 persons, runs the lucrative Ikorodu-Marina route charging naira 200 (\$1.35) per trip, likewise CityLink runs Badore-Osborne and Badore-Falomo for naira 200 per trip on either route. Kayode Bawa-Allah, Dean of the School of Transport at Lagos State University noted that the ferry fares are only naira 50 (\$0.34) more than the highest fare on a bus rapid transit (BRT) shuttle (see Reftel). However, the absence of BRT buses at ferry terminals undermines the public transportation integration the state government is aiming for. Cole assured the group this Lagos state is working to integrate water and land public transportation.

Water Guard Corps Ensure Security

17. (U) LASWA ensures security on ferry routes and terminals with its team of Water Guard Corps and a detachment of policemen from an anti-terrorist squad. It requires operators to provide lifejackets to each passenger before boarding the ferry. Cole said the agency plans to concession the management of the terminals to private sector operators in the near term, with the agency retaining its regulatory oversight ensuring safety of passengers and strict adherence to security rules by operators.

18. (U) Comment: Unaware of the skills gap and institutional constraints in the sector, for many Lagosians, the sight of big red or blue public buses around the metropolis, and ferries on the Lagos lagoon is a sign the State government is thinking of the millions of citizens who face a horrendous daily commute using dangerous motorcycle taxis or dilapidated and over-crowded private buses to navigate Lagos's crumbling and flood-prone streets. If Lagos succeeds in creating and effectively running its proposed integrated public transportation plan, it could become a model for other states

and revolutionize urban public transportation in Nigeria. End
comment.

19. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.

BLAIR